

Who needs a CDL?

A commercial driver license (CDL) is required for anyone operating a vehicle that:

- Weighs over 26,000 pounds. To determine the weight of the vehicle, use the highest of the following weights:
 - ~ manufacturer's gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)
 - ~ manufacturer's gross combination weight rating (GCWR)
 - ~ actual weight
 - ~ registered weight
- Carries hazardous materials that require placarding under federal law. (Placarding requirements are found in Title 49, Code of Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, part 397.)
- Is designed or used to carry 16 or more persons including the driver.

What does the law require?

Creation of a classified licensing system consisting of:

- **Class A** – Any combination of vehicles with a GVWR, actual weight, or registered weight over 26,000 pounds provided the GVWR, actual weight, or registered weight of the towed vehicle(s) is more than 10,000 pounds.

Some examples: tractor-trailer combinations with single or double trailers, '18 wheelers.'

- **Class B** – Any single vehicle with a GVWR, actual weight, or registered weight over 26,000 pounds or such vehicle towing a vehicle with a GVWR, actual weight, or registered weight of 10,000 pounds or less.

Some examples: dump trucks, most buses.

- **Class C** – Any single vehicle with a GVWR, actual weight, or registered weight of 26,000 pounds or less (or such vehicle towing a vehicle less than 10,000 pounds) transporting hazardous materials in amounts requiring placarding, or designed or used to carry 16 or more persons including the driver.

Some examples: pick-up trucks, small buses, and other small vehicles carrying passengers or placarded for hazardous materials.

- **Class D** – Automobiles and light trucks.
- **Class M** – Motorcycles.

Issuing of only one license to each driver.

Testing of commercial drivers. Commercial operators must pass a knowledge exam and skills test in the type of vehicle they drive. School bus drivers are required to pass a knowledge test and abbreviated driving skills test at each renewal. Commercial drivers with an H endorsement are required to pass a hazardous materials knowledge test at each renewal.

Enforcement of the law is through the Commercial Driver License Information System (CDLIS), a computer network of all states. Wisconsin has 275,472 commercial drivers entered on CDLIS as of December 1, 2001. This includes commercial instruction permits and licenses.

Enforcement of CDL disqualifications for alcohol and serious traffic violations such as a BAC of .04 in a commercial motor vehicle and speeding in excess in a commercial motor vehicle (15 mph or more).

What is an endorsement?

An endorsement allows you to drive a vehicle with special operating characteristics or with passengers. To receive any of the following endorsements you must pass special tests:

T – Double/Triple Trailers

N – Tank Vehicles

H – Hazardous Materials

S – School Bus

P – Passenger

F – Farm Service (Restricted)

For more information contact:

Bureau of Driver Services
Records and Licensing Information Section
Customer Service Unit
(608) 266-2353
Email: rlis.dmv@dot.state.wi.us